



MAYOR BYRON W. BROWN

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**BUFFALO OLMSTED PARKS CONSERVANCY RECEIVES  
\$3 MILLION RALPH C. WILSON, JR. FOUNDATION GRANT**  
*Funding to support new five-year capital projects, planning and operations*

**Buffalo, N.Y.** – The Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy today announced the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation awarded it a \$3 million grant, supporting key initiatives for the City of Buffalo’s signature park system.

The grant is the latest of three recent announcements that collectively strengthen the Conservancy’s long-term outlook, including approval of its five-year capital plan and successfully renewing a 12-year public-partnership agreement with the City.

“Our new partnership agreement with the City is a huge accomplishment and this incredible grant continues that surge of excitement,” said Conservancy Board Chair Elizabeth McPhail. “As a nonprofit that currently operates without an endowment, our goal via these funds is to inspire all of Western New York to continue investing in our mission, our historic green spaces and our collective quality of life. We cannot thank the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation enough.”

The Wilson funds will be allocated over three years for specific areas of capital projects, planning and operational support. Capital projects will see \$1.5 million earmarked as 1:1 matching funds to seed and leverage additional community and corporate support for key park improvements and revenue-generating opportunities; park operations will receive \$900,000; and the remaining \$600,000 will go toward continued studies, plan development and capacity.

“Thank you once again to the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation for its continuing commitment to the City of Buffalo and its residents,” said Mayor Byron W. Brown. “From the more than \$100 million the Foundation has earmarked for Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park, greenways and trails, funding to promote creative physical activity across our City, to today’s announcement of \$3 million to support and enhance Buffalo’s Olmsted Parks, the foundation continues to ensure Ralph C. Wilson, Jr.’s legacy as a true champion of the City of Buffalo.”

The Conservancy previously received three smaller grants totaling nearly \$100,000 from the Wilson Foundation and through its fund at the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo. Those grants have supported soccer field rehabilitations at Delaware Park and development of unstructured play kits for summer activities throughout the Olmsted park system.

“Frederick Law Olmsted understood 150 years ago, when he first toured Buffalo, that parks provide an opportunity to connect people and place. The historic Olmsted Parks and the entire City of Buffalo park system provide greenspace for thousands of people every day from across the City to walk, play, or simply connect with nature,” said David O. Egner, president & CEO, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation. “The strong collaboration between the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy and the City of Buffalo ensures that this opportunity will continue to exist for generations to come. We’re proud to support this work and help sustain what Olmsted described as the ‘best planned city in America.’”

The Conservancy’s Board of Trustees recently voted to approve publication of a five-year update to its master plan. After nine months of community engagement and specific input, the plan was presented to the public on June 18. It calls for an estimated \$19 million investment for improvements across the Olmsted system of parks and parkways. City representatives and Common Council members were involved in the process and have voiced support for the scope of planned projects.

“This grant is a game changer. We are jumping with joy and appreciation over this generous and diverse pool of funding that will allow us to continue our community-based work for the Olmsted park system of Buffalo,” said Stephanie Crockatt, the Conservancy’s executive director. “The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation is a true community champion and partner, and leading gifts like this are exactly the impetus we need to leverage and sustain investments for our invaluable parks.”

In addition to the capital project support, funding for planning includes a fundraising feasibility study, a facilities and revenue-generation study, and a business modeling study, which includes a strategic planning update for the Conservancy. Operational and maintenance allocations will go to further support the Conservancy’s labor force, as well as equipment needs, in caring for the entire park system.

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#### **About the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy**

The Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy is the first nonprofit organization in the nation, through a unique public-private partnership, to manage and operate an entire urban park system consisting of more than 850 acres of beautifully designed historic parks, parkways and circles. The Conservancy is an independent not-for-profit, community organization whose mission is to promote, preserve, restore, enhance, and maintain the Frederick Law Olmsted-designed parks and parkways in the Greater Buffalo area for current and future generations. Since 2004 the Conservancy has held responsibility for the management and care of these nationally registered historic green spaces, and in 2019 the Conservancy and City signed a new 12-year partnership agreement with an approved update to its five-year plan for the Olmsted parks in continuing to assist the City in bringing recognition to its collective renaissance. Designed by America’s first landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted more than 150 years ago, these 25 iconic connective spaces represent the nation’s first urban park system. More than 2.5 million visits occur in Buffalo’s Olmsted Park system annually for recreation, relaxation and rejuvenation. Most recently, the American Planning Association recognized Delaware Park as one of the 2014 Great Places in America, The Guardian

publication named Buffalo's Olmsted park system as one of the best park systems in the world, and in 2018 the Conservancy set a Guinness World Record in historic Bidwell Parkway. [www.bfloparks.org](http://www.bfloparks.org)

The Buffalo Olmsted Park System includes:

Six parks: Cazenovia, Delaware, Front, Martin Luther King, Jr., Riverside, and South parks

Seven parkways: Bidwell, Chapin, Lincoln, McKinley, Porter, Red Jacket, and Richmond

Eight landscaped traffic circles: Agassiz, Colonial, Ferry, Gates, McClellan, McKinley, Soldiers, and Symphony

#### **About the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation**

The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation is a grantmaking organization dedicated primarily to sustained investment in the quality of life of the people of Southeast Michigan and Western New York. The two areas reflect Ralph C. Wilson, Jr.'s devotion to his hometown of Detroit and greater Buffalo, home of his Buffalo Bills franchise. Prior to his passing in 2014, Mr. Wilson requested that a significant share of his estate be used to continue a life-long generosity of spirit by funding the Foundation that bears his name. The Foundation has a grantmaking capacity of \$1.2 billion over a 20-year period, which expires January 8, 2035. This structure is consistent with Mr. Wilson's desire for the Foundation's impact to be immediate, substantial, measurable and overseen by those who knew him best. For more information visit [www.rcwjrf.org](http://www.rcwjrf.org)